

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It was not long ago when you were invited to attend a Parish Town Hall meeting. Once again, I ask that we gather in the Church this Sunday, October 10 following the 10:30 a.m. Mass at 11:45 a.m. In a time of division and chaos across our country, no less than here at St. Joseph's over the best practices to address our response to the pandemic. Each of us has our reasons to wear masks and be vaccinated or not. As members of the parish, however, each of you have a sincere stake in the wellbeing of St. Joseph often evidenced in your care and offerings of gifts of time, talents, and finances. The purpose of our parish meeting is not to accentuate our divisions, but to sincerely seek ways that can heal the breaches among us in our responses to the Covid in a truly Catholic manner that is mindful and respectful of one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord. My hope is to offer a way to see each other, not with fear and mistrust in our Covid responses, but in how we can welcome one another to gather at the Lord's table of Word and Eucharist.

What does this mean and how can this be done? The only agenda item I ask is that we place in our thoughts and hearts a proposal that can help us to be together, the masked and unmasked, the vaccinated and unvaccinated. This will not be a time to state why, or why not I am masked or unmasked. This is a time to set before the parish a way to navigate that, while may not be agreeable to all, can however ease these unfortunate divisions that are played out across our nation and Church and add even more suffering, pain, anger, and rage. Before you arrive, please have in hand a proposal on how we can all gather safely for worship under St. Joseph's roof. Come prepared to offer proposals that respect the safety and health of each other. Due to the short notice and legitimate concerns for personal health and well-being, you are invited to email your proposal, that will be read, considered, and voted on like any spoken proposal to the people that will gather in person. I ask that this not be a time to state why or why not you have the position you do, but to offer ways that can bring a modicum of unity, and mutual respect. Like before, the meeting will be on you tube.

I believe I answered the first part of the question "What does this mean?' Now, how can this be done with a modicum of safety for all who will gather in person? For all parishioners who choose to remain masked I ask that you continue to do so. For all parishioners who choose to remain unmasked I ask that you be mindful of a measure of social distancing. Prior to the meeting the Church will be

sanitized with hospital strength disinfectant. The disinfectant is not simply for a time of Covid, but in the near future during the flu and cold seasons.

As stated previously, each proposal that will be offered will be read in its entirety from the lectern for the sake of clarity. Each proposal will not be discussed initially as on its stated merits but will be voted on in a simple democratic process. The next proposal will then be read and voted on and so forth. With two volunteers counting the votes for each proposal we can gain some consensus as to the very best in how we can move together as a parish. Each proposal that is voted to move forward will be reread and considered. Those proposals that the parish is willing to move forward for further consideration will then be voted on until we have one or two proposals that have the best possible opportunity to reach a consensus to move forward on respect, unity, and the best possible health care for all members. A discussion will ensue. This may take a bit of time for discussion. Oftentimes, the Holy Spirit can and does move in a manner that evidences wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, prayer, and courage. As I mentioned earlier, what we can arrive at may not be totally agreeable to all participants. I, however, want to let you know that I will abide by the faith community's decision. The proposal will then be disseminated to the entire parish community via bulletin, bulletin announcements and emails. If you have not offered your email address to the office, please consider doing so. While there are many ways to confront a time of legitimate division we can choose Christ's way, not by authority alone, but by the words and their meanings that hold one another as God holds us within his heart.

May this be a time of healing which perhaps can show other Catholic communities how St. Joseph's chooses to care for all its members, mutually loved and respected. Thank you for your consideration and future willingness to participate in what my hope will be a pattern in how the parish community can move forward with the Lord's guidance and wisdom.

Respectfully in Christ, Fr. Bill Allegretto, C.M.